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MONTANA LABOR MARKET

Monthly Review of
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

L. G. DeNayer, Commissioner — M. Joe Miller, Chairman and Executive Director — J. J. Smith, Commissioner

312 N. Main — P. O. Box 1728 — Helena, Montana

F-L-81 — MARCH, 1950

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Along the Hiring Line --- Field Summary--March 1

Anaconda—(Active file 212; 74 women, 37 veterans) Road and building construction in April will absorb present supply of qualified applicants. Flow of transients has dwindled, fewer new applicants. Orders in clearance for upholsterer and journeyman construction painter.

Billings—(Active file 2,044; 391 women, 562 veterans) Peak of new applicant load reached in February; new claims on decline. Industrial activity will be hiring during April, mostly on call-back basis. No in-migration justified, except for upholsterer, radio repairman and four map draftsmen now on clearance order.

Bozeman—(Active file 485; 124 women, 148 veterans) Employers reporting

(Continued on Page 2)

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In this new form, printed, the Montana Labor Market is expanded to contain also the monthly Estimates of Montana Employment, by industry, and the Highlights from the State Labor Market, providing a compact review of employment facts for distribution to those interested, and eliminating duplication of material and distribution which necessarily occurred with separate publications.

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MORE THAN 18,000 JOB APPLICANTS AWAIT CALL-BACK TO MONTANA INDUSTRY

Montana's labor market during February and early March was characterized by the largest surplus of labor, 18,800, that it has had since the war period At the same time the employed working force was the greatest, 139,600, of any February on record. Jobs were opening up in the seasonal industries, especially construction, a little earlier than usual, but not in sufficient volume to constitute a major movement, or to justify hopes for early absorption of the flood of work applicants.

In-Migration Has Swelled Reserve Supply

Existence of this larger surplus of workers and of this expanded working force at the same time may be an indication that ample labor reserves are on hand in Montana localities to meet the spring and summer demands which are expected to develop. It is definitely an indication of a growth in the labor force far exceeding that which would have resulted from the natural entrance of new workers into the labor market as they reached employable age. To that extent the migration of new applicants into the state offers about the only plausible explanation of the pronounced growth of the labor force.

No Wholesale Hiring in Sight

Prospects for absorption of the 18,000 applicants registered for work at the beginning of March hinge upon resumption of operations in the principal seasonal industries. Outlook is good for construction activities, in building, in roads and bridges, in dams, and in utilities; likewise there will be April and May resumption of operations in logging and lumbering, forest maintenance tourist services and accommodations; farm and livestock employment should open strongly in April and continue through the summer season; railroad maintenance will be a factor in late March and early April. No wholesale hiring however is in sight for any point in the state.

In-Migration Is Hazardous

Most employment offices say that labor demand in their areas will find ample supply for the months of April and May. A few indications point to exhaustion of active files by midsummer. In general the outlook is extremely hazardous for aimless in-migration. Inquiries concerning possible job openings for in-migrants should be met with frank appraisals in the light of prospects as they now appear. Any encouragement to such migration is almost certain to lead to hardship and disappointment.

Should labor demands outrun the supply in any locality the employment service administering the area is responsible for taking prompt steps to secure adequate applicant supply. Through full use of standard procedures the employment needs of all employers can be safeguarded, and the interests of the jobseekers and of the employers are thus protected.

Limited Hiring at Hungry Horse

Limited hiring activity is reported from the Hungry Horse project during early March, preliminary to the resumption of concrete pouring on the dam itself when temperature conditions permit. All job openings on the prime contract itself are under union arrangement, and call-backs will provide the bulk of required workers during early stages. Employment last season rose to about 1,900, is expected to go to around 2,500 this season The new openings are not expected to develop until late spring or early summer.

In the area of the Hungry Horse project there are more than 3,000 applicants for work now. From one-third to one-half of these are interested primarily in returning to the jobs they gave up when cold weather caused the winter shut-down The other one-half to two-thirds of available applicants will be recalled into logging or lumbering, or will fill service, forest, park and other openings. The Kalispell-Columbia Falls area from which the Hungry Horse workers will normally be drawn is definitely not a favorable prospect for migrants. Ample notice of openings beyond local supply will be furnished

(Continued on page 2)

BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS

Comparison of Significant Operations as Reported from Montana Employment Offices for February, 1950, and February, 1949

Employment Service Office	New Job Applicants				Jobseekers in File				Job Placements				Employer Visits		Job Openings		U. I. Claims Wk End 3-13	
	Feb. 1950		Feb. 1949		Feb. 1950		Feb. 1949		Feb. 1950		Feb. 1949							
	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	1950	1949	1950	1949	1950	1949
Anaconda	75	9	20	4	212	37	120	33	8	5	5	2	41	56	10	63	205	68
Billings	402	119	330	99	2,044	562	917	343	126	51	131	52	63	45	83	124	1,415	585
Bozeman	99	34	109	34	483	148	311	117	103	29	139	53	92	56	103	135	342	119
Butte	191	36	205	50	1,220	238	876	258	87	19	96	11	81	22	197	100	990	672
Cut Bank	102	26	193	81	297	127	275	105	9	2	1	0	12	0	22	3	252	195
Dillon	35	8	19	9	185	59	133	77	36	13	22	13	49	25	39	20	104	49
Forsyth	43	14	33	18	121	38	83	51	23	9	13	7	29	26	23	12	68	42
Fort Benton	17	3	13	6	75	27	51	28	25	15	7	3	37	31	18	5	56	22
Glasgow	44	16	43	19	413	158	263	122	27	5	12	4	44	22	46	12	266	138
Glendive	91	27	52	18	369	108	113	47	9	4	21	6	17	26	6	14	214	95
Great Falls	314	95	367	129	1,472	456	1,277	531	98	45	103	42	91	37	121	108	1,186	746
Hamilton	71	13	78	19	749	205	653	276	38	13	18	11	43	28	39	15	477	535
Havre	89	20	75	37	588	192	238	131	41	16	20	9	53	28	48	22	374	160
Helena	316	87	165	85	1,009	323	626	294	109	44	149	56	114	55	142	146	649	379
Kalispell	355	75	381	99	3,836	767	1,609	527	28	12	29	8	70	15	30	33	2,650	1,043
Lewistown	30	13	65	38	317	85	237	123	25	7	10	4	63	14	36	6	248	150
Libby	56	18	45	9	425	149	339	148	2	2	10	1	1	2	5	11	566	259
Livingston	116	40	143	74	387	115	159	124	61	17	40	13	36	33	58	34	217	188
Malta	30	7	37	12	180	57	171	85	6	4	7	3	13	21	11	3	155	98
Miles City	82	28	48	17	555	209	242	112	67	21	38	20	47	18	57	37	400	150
Missoula	207	49	206	55	1,432	402	886	373	60	15	123	56	96	72	60	146	1,091	904
Polson	42	10	87	22	607	186	513	201	6	3	19	5	14	11	13	20	445	471
Red Lodge	31	6	26	10	283	108	243	127	9	3	6	4	6	14	12	5	254	138
Shelby	64	15	39	16	267	87	107	66	29	4	21	8	47	25	36	27	212	61
Sidney	60	6	53	11	413	106	273	101	30	10	51	15	60	84	42	51	263	231
Thomp. Falls	63	21	132	52	328	63	462	169	25	13	19	7	21	27	25	17	396	327
Wolf Point	75	20	37	16	289	88	143	88	2	0	4	3	19	37	12	10	276	65
Tchr. Plcmt	33	11	.....	.....	296	73	.....	.....	3	0	.....	.....	7	.....	41	.....	.....	.....
TOTALS	3,142	826	3,414	1,169	18,852	5,173	13,097	5,371	1,092	381	1,204	458	1,266	1,037	1,335	1,260	13,771	10,760

1949 figures include reports from Baker, Chinook, Columbia Falls, Conrad, Deer Lodge, Hardin, Plentywood, Roundup, Scobey and Mail Claims—consolidated with other offices in 1950 figures.

More Than 18,000 Job Applicants on Call

(Continued from page 1)

to employment service offices in other parts of Montana and to adjacent states.

Supply Ample for Canyon Ferry

Contractors at Canyon Ferry are on the verge of calling back a few of their crews, and should expand into employment for several hundred by early April. That was about the number on the payroll prior to seasonal shutdown in December. Some expansion through the late spring and summer season is anticipated but no wholesale hiring is expected to develop. More than 1,000 applicants are in the files at Helena, many of them awaiting call-back to Canyon Ferry jobs.

Highway Construction Resuming

Some activity on highway and bridge contracts is evident at mid-March, indicating an upward trend in employment totals in those fields. As weather conditions permit there are some 25 highway contracts and a dozen bridge jobs, along with several overpasses, which will be factors in the labor market. In the neighborhood of 800 additional hires will result, on the widely dispersed highway front. Employment on maintenance crews reported by the highway commission during February averaged 636, a slight increase over January. The state highway contracting program for the 1950 season will be opened in late March and will add substantially to the present backlog of highway work.

Along the Hiring Line

(Continued from Page 1)

surplus of personal applications. Contractors on buildings, overpass, highway, and pipeline will begin hiring in mid-March. Agricultural employment dormant, timber and logging closed by road conditions, until April at best.

Butte—(Active file 1,220; 386 women, 238 veterans) Employment still slow, little change expected until April. Some construction work has resumed, other projects waiting for April or May settled weather. Miner order reduced from 500 to 100. New applicants fewer in February than previous months.

Cut Bank—(Active file 297; 68 women, 127 veterans) Construction contractors and oil drilling operators will recall crews in March, weather permitting.

Billings Has Labor Surplus

An unusually prolific supply of labor is reflected in the Billings area, which includes Roundup and Hardin. In part this is a hangover from the oil refinery construction projects of a year ago. Expectation of other projects in construction tends to hold the applicants in that locality. Unless such other employing projects develop there is likelihood of out-migration of several hundred workers from the Billings area as work opens up elsewhere in the spring. Farm hiring probably not until April. Decrease in new applications in February.

Dillon—(Active file 185; 36 women, 59 veterans) Little change in employment from January. Farm demands start with lambing in March; flocks drastically reduced from past years. Two mining projects expected to be hiring on small scale this spring.

Forsyth—(Active file 121; 24 women, 38 veterans; 65 applicants over 45) Hiring will begin in March, in agriculture and by contractors on highways and building.

Glasgow—(Active file 413; 45 women, 158 veterans) Peak of unemployment has passed, few call-backs by construction employers already noted, but no new hires in prospect until late March. Need for librarian and married couple to manage golf club and dining room reflected in clearance.

Glendive—(Active file 369; 80 women, 108 veterans) A few construction call-backs in late February, some road contractors will be re-calling their crews by March 15. Farm work inactive until late March.

Great Falls—(Active file 1,472; 348 women, 456 veterans) Ample labor supply in nearly all classifications until April, or later.

Hamilton—(Active file 749; 127 women, 205 veterans) Closing of a pole treating plant increased labor supply in February. Logging decreased by road condi-

(Continued on Page 4)

February Working Force Breaks Winter Record

Employment in non-agricultural industries of Montana for February, 1950, was 4,000 greater than in February of 1949, establishing a new record for the month which traditionally is the low point in the state's employment figure, according to estimates released jointly by the state's Unemployment Compensation Commission and the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Ten years ago, in February, 1940, the state's total employment, aside from farm jobs, was 104,000. By February, 1947, it had reached the figure of 127,700; a year later it was 132,200; in 1949 the level was 135,500, and 1950 surpasses all these figures with 139,600 on industrial payrolls in February.

This is still 13,300 below the top figure reached by employment in September, 1949, reflecting the seasonal nature of much of Montana's industrial economy. Approximately ten percent of the working force is affected by this seasonal curtailment of employment. The pattern as developed in past years provides a decline from November through February and a gradual uptrend from March to midsummer or early fall.

Comparison of the February estimates with those for February of 1949, reveals an increase of 1,000 in manufacturing, mostly in durable goods, and an increase of 2,000 in retail trade. Mining employment, on the other hand, went down about 1,000, largely due to the idleness of approximately 1,000 coal miners at the February report date in 1950, pending settlement of the nationwide labor tie-up in that industry. Construction employment this year was 400 above that of February, 1949, but still 6,000 below its high point in July, 1949.

The February estimates show a decline of 1,500 from employment a month before, also conforming to the seasonal pattern. This was largely influenced by the idleness of coal miners due to strike conditions. Manufacturing of durable goods was down 300 in employment from January, interstate railroad employment decreased 100, and employment by state and local governments also declined 100.

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA[1]

INDUSTRY	Employment in Thousands			Percent Change[4]	
	Feb. 1950[2]	Jan. 1950[3]	Feb. 1949	Jan. 50 to Feb. 50	Feb. 49 to Feb. 50
Total nonagricultural industries	139.6	141.1	135.5	—1.0	3.1
Total manufacturing	16.9	17.3	15.9	—1.9	6.3
Durable goods	10.2	10.5	9.4	—2.1	8.4
Lumber and timber products	4.9	5.0	3.9	—2.6	26.7
Primary metals	4.2	4.3	4.5	—1.7	—8.0
Other[5]	1.1	1.2	1.0	—1.6	11.8
Nondurable goods	6.7	6.8	6.5	—1.5	3.3
Food and kindred products	3.5	3.6	3.6	—2.7	—3.3
Printing and publishing	1.4	1.4	1.4	—1.1	3.7
Other[6]	1.8	1.8	1.5	0.4	18.5
Total mining	9.5	10.5	10.5	—8.7	—8.8
Metal mining	7.8	7.8	7.8	0.3	0.0
Bituminous and soft coal mining	1	1.1	1.0	—87.7	—86.6
Petroleum-natural gas production	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.6	—6.6
Quarrying and nonmetallic mining	.5	.5	.5	—0.4	0.8
Contract Construction	6.3	6.2	5.9	0.1	5.6
Contractors, building construction	2.1	2.1	1.9	—1.8	12.5
Contractors, other than building	1.7	1.6	2.0	4.1	—16.4
Contractors, special trade	2.5	2.5	2.0	—0.9	21.3
Total transportation and utilities	21.0	21.1	21.1	—0.5	—0.4
Interstate railroads	13.1	13.2	13.5	—0.6	—3.0
Transportation except railroads	3.5	3.5	3.0	0.7	17.1
Utilities including communication	4.4	4.4	4.6	—1.2	—4.5
Total Trade	36.5	36.5	34.5	0.1	5.8
Wholesale trade	8.1	8.0	8.1	1.3	0.8
Retail trade	28.4	28.5	26.4	—0.3	7.3
General merchandise and apparel	6.7	6.8	5.5	—1.3	22.3
Food and liquor stores	3.6	3.6	3.5	1.8	3.1
Restaurants	7.4	7.3	6.9	0.1	5.5
Automotive and filling stations	4.6	4.7	4.4	—1.5	5.0
Retail trade not elsewhere classified	6.1	6.1	6.1	0.3	—0.1
Finance, insurance and real estate	3.7	3.7	3.6	0.9	3.9
Total services and miscellaneous	18.6	18.6	17.3	—0.3	7.6
Hotels, rooming houses, camps, etc.	3.0	2.9	2.5	1.7	22.3
Personal services	2.5	2.5	2.3	0.0	7.7
Other[7]	13.1	13.2	12.5	—0.8	4.7
Government	27.1	27.2	26.7	0.4	1.5
Federal[8]	20.1	20.2	19.5	—0.5	2.6
State and local	20.1	20.2	19.5	—0.5	2.6

[1]Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members, personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.

[2]Preliminary estimates based on partial return of selected sample of Montana employers.

[3]Figures previously released have been revised on the basis of more complete reports.

[4]Percent changes are based on actual rather than rounded figures.

[5]Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.

[6]Includes apparel, chemicals, petroleum, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.

[7]Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and professional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.

[8]Federal employment—first of the month.

Neighbor States Report Ample Labor Supplies

Other states adjacent to Montana are experiencing about the same seasonal fluctuations as Montana, according to their published reports on labor market conditions. Layoffs during the winter months have mounted to higher figures in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Wyoming than have prevailed over the post-war period. Call-backs have been a little earlier in Oregon than the other states, reducing their available applicant rolls by about 5,000 a week during February.

Idaho says that employment prospects there continued to show promise of spring. Principal gains in employment were in agriculture, construction, wholesale and retail trade, and service industries. Despite these increased work opportunities the applicants continued to out-number the job openings by about 45 to 1. There were 18,000 listed for work in that state on March 1; of these 3,096 were women.

In Washington there has been no large scale hiring but some upturn has been noted in construction employment, mostly in the nature of call-backs. An abundance of applicants are present at the Hanford project, Grand Coulee, Bremerton, the aircraft plants and other construction projects.

Wyoming reports a good backlog of work in the state, once weather breaks, with a prospect for rapid dwindling of their available applicant files in March and April. Heavy layoffs in December and January ran the totals of unemployed persons above records of recent years. In the coal mining sections of Wyoming there is prospect of more workers than jobs during the 1950 spring and summer

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

INDUSTRY	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	Jan. 1950	Dec. 1949	Nov. 1949	Jan. 1950	Dec. 1949	Nov. 1949	Jan. 1950	Dec. 1949	Nov. 1949
All Manufacturing	$61.05	$62.88	$61.76	39.93	41.70	41.59	$1.528	$1.508	$1.485
Durable goods	59.45	61.30	59.37	39.37	40.57	39.24	1.510	1.511	1.513
Primary metals	57.74	56.79	55.08	39.74	39.71	38.71	1.453	1.430	1.423
Nondurable goods	64.20	65.16	64.99	41.05	43.35	44.70	1.564	1.503	1.454
Food and kindred products	53.76	54.44	56.00	41.87	43.59	44.98	1.284	1.249	1.245
All Mining	60.28	60.91	62.41	37.65	37.46	38.24	1.601	1.626	1.632
Metal mining	59.07	59.97	58.84	38.53	38.69	38.38	1.533	1.550	1.533
All transportation and utilities (except railroads)	63.72	63.06	63.28	40.37	40.48	40.71	1.578	1.558	1.554
Transportation (except railroads)	71.06	69.87	68.82	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Utilities and communication	57.98	58.10	59.31	40.18	40.32	40.54	1.443	1.441	1.463

Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel.

These estimates are derived from reports submitted each month by Montana employers cooperating in the program conducted jointly by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Unemployment Compensation Commission.

Along the Hiring Line

(Continued from Page 2)

tions. Farm and contract construction employment will open in March, local supply adequate.

Havre—(Active file 588; 119 women, 192 veterans) Supply of labor is increasing, with total employment fully up to same period a year ago. All phases of employment will open up late in March, weather permitting. No large construction projects in prospect. Order in clearance for salesman, household equipment.

Helena—(Active file 1,009; 183 women, 323 veterans) Open February weather released employment block in construction, mostly on call-back basis. Some activity commencing at Canyon Ferry dam, for installation of aggregate plant. Little further employment on that project until April. Local labor adequate until June, only persistent shortage is for six staff nurses, see clearance.

Kalispell—(Active file 3,836; 519 women, 767 veterans) Logging and lumbering employment remains at minimum; construction and agriculture dormant. February weather severe, discouraged labor demand but some expected to develop in March. Most of the hiring will be in April and May, with local supply more than ample. Supply far exceeds demand for Hungry Horse project, with 800 available in immediate area and many more in Kalispell awaiting openings. Hiring there will be on limited scale in March, concrete work can not be undertaken until late April.

Lewistown—(Active file 317; 66 women, 85 veterans) Labor market dormant through February, some optimism apparent for March in construction activities and a few agricultural openings. A diesel mechanic sought through clearance.

Libby—(Active file 425; 47 women, 149 veterans) Employment openings scarce, though small scale resumption in woods was manifest late in February. Spring breakup of logging roads will again halt this trend in March, and until about April 15. No in-migration warranted.

Livingston—(Active file 387; 88 women, 115 veterans) Little hiring done in February. Railroad needs all filled, other industries will resume gradually in March and April. Supply sufficient to meet spring demands. Nine railroad boilermakers are on clearance order.

Malta—(Active file 180; 39 women, 57 veterans) Farm and railroad employment expected to begin in March, increasing through April. No movement at present. Ample local supply. An all-round butcher needed, order in clearance.

Miles City—(Active file 555; 95 women, 209 veterans; 72 men and 3 women over 50) More than adequate present supply should dwindle through March and April as construction jobs resume, railroad track crews are assembled, and agricultural demands increase. Seeking a machine presser through medium of clearance.

Missoula—(Active file 1,432; 289 women, 402 veterans) New hiring still at a minimum. Call-backs issued in late February reduced active claimant file. Local supply ample for all expected calls up to June. Unfilled order for manager, caterer, is circulating in clearance.

Polson—(Active file 607; 58 women, 196 veterans) Call-backs by a lumber concern in March will put about 40 men back on the payroll. Road conditions hinder resumption of logging. Construction projects await more settled weather. Local supply ample.

Red Lodge—(Active file 283; 51 women, 108 veterans) Increased labor supply in February, reaching peak the tenth. Coal miner employment after strike settlement appears uncertain, demand for coal below normal. Order in clearance for an all-round butcher.

Shelby—(Active file 267; 48 women, 87 veterans) Improved weather in February eased labor surplus. Building and construction employment will expand in March. Clearance orders circulating for map draftsman and general office clerk.

Sidney—(Active file 413; 78 women, 106 veterans) Supply is plentiful with all needed skills represented. March demand mostly in construction, expect more activity in April, along with farm orders. Four staff nurses and an electrician are sought through clearance.

Thompson Falls—(Active file 328; 31 women, 63 veterans) Some resumption of lumber employment in February, but soft roads will again reduce activity in March.

Wolf Point—(Active file 289; 52 women, 88 veterans) Farm employment is below normal for this period, some improvement expected with warm weather in late March and April. Need an experienced salesman of cars and trucks, order in clearance.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION
COMMISSION OF MONTANA
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